

**Governor's Proposed FY23 Budget Adjustments**  
**Appropriations Hearing HB 5037 AAC the State Budget**  
**for the Biennium Ending June 30th, 2023**  
**Department of Housing, Wednesday, February 16th, 2022**  
**Testimony from Jason Rinaldi, MA, LMSW**  
**Western Ct Housing Resource Manager**  
**The Housing Collective**

Greetings, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and all members of this Appropriations Committee.

My name is Jason Rinaldi. I am the Western CT Housing Resource Manager for an agency known as The Housing Collective. Until recently we were known by the name of "Supportive Housing Works." We are the backbone agency that oversees much of the homeless response and affordable housing development in Fairfield and Litchfield Counties as well as the Greater Waterbury area. I have been working with people experiencing homelessness and others who are housing insecure for thirty years. During these thirty years I have served in multiple roles including leadership roles that developed services for the homeless and would create access to essential resources, affordable housing, jobs and other innovative programs that would break the cycle of homelessness for countless individuals and families. I directed several shelters in the tristate area. I coordinated outreach programs in New York City, New Haven, Waterbury, and Hartford. Since 1994 I worked as a clinician assisting people struggling with mental illness, addiction, and trauma. In 2006 I founded a community drop-in center, The Center for Renewal, for the homeless, the marginalized and those with addiction before I moved into my current role that manages and develops affordable housing resources in Western CT for our network of more than 100 partner agencies.

I come before you this evening to point to the ongoing crises of homelessness and the absolute lack of affordable housing inventory across our state. Additionally, the housing and homeless response community needs an increase in funding to sustain the already strained homeless response system as well as the vital services that prevent homelessness in the first place and ensure that those who are in affordable housing continue to maintain their housing for the long run. Through the housing first approach we know that the foundation of any true healing, or recovery as well as the success of any treatment program is contingent on access to safe, secure, and affordable living opportunities. It is hard to describe the trauma and horror that children, women, and men go through when they experience homelessness or who live under the daily burden of not knowing if they will have a place of their own next week, next month or even tomorrow. Because of the horror of homelessness, men, women, and children often succumb to the burden of this trauma and fall into mental illness, substance use among other unhealthy behaviors. It is also easy to see how this trauma absolutely derails the healthy development of children who sadly live under the cloud of housing insecurity and homelessness. Those who are receiving treatment or support service of any kind will not receive the benefit of that treatment if they are homeless or housing insecure. The best treatment available will always be rendered moot by the instability and anxiety that goes along with homelessness.

Homelessness and the lack of affordable housing is a public health crisis that creates a ripple effect of economic, public safety, mental health, and social collapse within local communities. I can testify to this fact from my thirty years of experience. The secondary and tertiary expenditures needed to respond to these multiple, unintended related crises are far more burdensome than the fast, effective solution of homeless and eviction prevention programming that has been confirmed to be effective in stopping the personal and wide spread effects of homelessness. A healthy and prosperous society is achieved when all members of that society are cared for, and nurtured with access to the basic human needs, not the least of which is affordable housing. We need to expanded funding for the development of affordable housing, eviction prevention and emergency shelter as well as to expand services for those who need specialized supports to maintain a healthy and happy life and participate in the upbuilding of

local communities. In order for the State of CT to avoid the public health disaster that is homeless, funding of affordable housing and homeless response must remain a priority because this ongoing work has always proven to mitigate a much deeper social crisis that has a far deeper impact when essential needs of people, such as affordable housing and support services, are allowed to evaporate from the community.

The sad fact of any human community is that there will likely always be a segment of that society who are vulnerable and who suffer under illness, lack of access to essential resources or who suffer under the weight of personal tragedy. It is therefore essential for the just and good functioning of the larger society to take care of the most vulnerable, so their suffering is justly abated and the wellbeing of the larger community is protected. The common good is established only when all members of society are cared for accordingly. Thank you for funding homeless prevention programs, homeless response and mental health services for the most vulnerable members of our society.

Sincerely yours,

**Jason Rinaldi, MA, LMSW** (He, Him)  
Western CT Housing Resource Manager



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